the translator and his shadow, part two

Nietzsche's Political Philosophy

ARALTES

MAR 01, 2022

35 6 Share

> Everything that happens, happens in accordance with this strife, and it is just in the strife that eternal justice is revealed. It is a wonderful idea, welling up from the purest strings of Hellenism, the idea that strife embodies the everlasting sovereignty of strict justice, bound to everlasting laws. Only a Greek was capable of finding such an idea to be the fundament of a cosmology; it is Hesiod's good *Eris* transformed into the cosmic principle; it is the contest-idea of the Greek individual and the Greek state, taken from the gymnasium and the palaestra, from the artist's *agon*, from the contest between political parties and between cities — all transformed into universal application so that now the wheels of the cosmos turn on it. [*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Chapter 5]

In the preceding essay I discussed the meaning of Nietzsche's project of translating man back into nature, and how the dynamic physics of Heraclitus led Nietzsche to preach the willed improvement of mankind, through the embrace of hierarchy, within the individual soul and within a people. Nietzsche exhorts modern man to use science to manipulate himself in service of a grand project as he has manipulated nature in the past: "to see to it that the human being henceforth stands before human beings as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before *the rest of nature*," so that Europe can obtain "a long, terrible will of its own that would be able to cast its goals millennia hence" — to point mankind towards a goal and begin a new tragedy emerging from the comedy of nihilism — *incipit tragœdia, incipit Zarathustra*.

This doctrine of nature *in flux*, nature as eternal strife attaining perfection embodied in the Greek gymnasium and contest, is the basis for Nietzsche's conception of culture, which is in turn the basis for his politics. The question of Nietzsche's political philosophy has been subject to intense controversy and distortion since before his death, and due to its association with the Third Reich, his politics have

been de-emphasized or ignored by Anglo-American academia ever since the dual "rehabilitation" spearheaded by the German-Jewish-American Walter Kaufmann and British R.J. Hollingdale in the 1950s and 60s. In addition to the thundercloud of National Socialism, further confusion is added by the fact that Nietzsche, writing in the 1870s and 80s, saw at once both fifty and one hundred and fifty years into the political future. In this essay I will show that just as online bodybuilders are the only true followers of Nietzsche's teaching of nature, only spiritual and physical tyrants — the monsters of will who are unassimilable into so-called modern democracies — are the legitimate heirs to Nietzsche's political philosophy, which is better suited for our time, and for online heretics, than it was for the epoch of fascism and the Third Reich. Of Nietzsche's political predictions, those that were not proven correct by 1945 are coming to pass today. More than any other philosophy or state religion, Nietzsche's ideas will be the basis for the regimes of the future; not states, but *regimes* — that is, self-conscious collective manipulations of body and spirit *en masse*, that give rise to the formation of new peoples and human types who attempt to will themselves towards higher life.

Broadly speaking, the 'normie' retconning of Nietzsche, from Kaufmann to the French postmodernists, relies on an undue focus on his 'critique' of morality, while ignoring his positive doctrines. Naturally, the castration of Nietzsche's philosophy, the removal of his imperatives and value preferences, prepared the ground for the castration of Nietzschean politics and political hopes.

The rehabilitation of Nietzsche, which makes his books safe for discussion in seminars and lecture halls, relies on the argument that his philosophy is "individualist" and therefore "antipolitical." Like so much else, this tactic is a neat inversion — this very "individualist" quality of Nietzsche's diagnosis of modernity is the key to understanding his prediction of the death of European democracy, and the reemergence of a more "artistic" and "virile" Europe, with a new ruling caste, that will become "mistress" — i.e., conqueror — of the Earth and vehicle for the re-emergence of antiquity in the modern world. The "antipolitical" popular interpretation of Nietzsche rests on three observations: his disdain for Germany, his dislike of nationalism, and his aversion to the state. These three political judgments can only be understood in light of Nietzsche's view of high culture and its role in

promoting life, a view that led him to exhort Europe to pursue higher goals and an authentic revival of the tragic, Hellenic spirit. [1]

> The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. [*Beyond Good and Evil*, §4] [2]

Here, in section 4 of Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche proposes in simple terms the value-system of his philosophy: to evaluate judgments not according to their truth-value, but according to their ability to promote life. He would sharpen and radicalize this approach in The Antichrist: [3]

> 2.
>
> What is good? — Everything that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in humans.
>
> What is bad? All that stems from weakness.
>
> What is happiness? The feeling that power is growing, that resistance is being overcome.
>
> Not contentment but more power, not peace at all but war; not virtue but proficiency (virtue in Renaissance-style, *virtù*, moraline-free virtue).
>
> The weak and deformed should perish: first principle of our love of humanity. And we should even help them. What is more harmful than any vice? — The act of compassion toward all who are deformed and weak — Christianity. . . [4]
>
> 3.
>
> The problem I am posing here is not what should succeed humanity in the sequence of life forms (— the human is an end —): but which type of human we should breed, should will, as being of higher value, worthier of life, more certain of a future. [5]

So here we have, in the most extreme and unapologetic form, the end goal of Nietzsche's morality, the promotion of higher types of men. This passage also gives

us Nietzsche's method for studying moralities: he analyzes them with respect to what kind of humans they produce. This approach, grounded in physical reality and the human experience, is absolutely vital to understanding Nietzsche, and it is the essence of Zarathustra's famous imperative: "Remain loyal to the earth!"

However, Nietzsche's proposed morality raises a question: Why should this be the end goal? Why should "power and splendor" be the traits selected for by a new morality? [6] Why not, for example, honesty? The answer lies in Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> For what must be clear to us above all, both to our humiliation *and* our elevation, is that the whole comedy of art is certainly not performed for us, neither for our edification nor our education, just as we are far from truly being the creators of that world of art; conversely, however, we may very well assume we are already images and artistic projections for the true creator of art, and that our highest dignity lies in our significance as works of art - **for only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally *justified*** - although, of course, our awareness of our significance in this respect hardly differs from the awareness which painted soldiers have of the battle depicted on the same canvas. [§5]

Life is just mere life, unbearable, pointless, without high culture, the spiritualization of cruelty and suffering that synthesizes the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses.

Walter Kaufmann could never accept this uncompromising view of art's role in sustaining life. He claimed that "Nietzsche abjured this romantic vision" after writing *The Birth of Tragedy*, and that in Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditation* on David Strauss, "the primacy of art and aesthetic values is renounced." [7] This claim is of course incorrect, and almost immediately in the same chapter of his Nietzsche biography, Kaufmann recasts his assertion as an alleged contrast between the early Nietzsche's belief in *l'art pour l'art* and the later Nietzsche's view of art as the only activity which lifts men above animals. [8] But of course the former "romantic" Nietzsche never existed; the radical elevation of aesthetics *for* the breeding of higher life was there from the beginning. We need not consult secondary sources to see this; in the chapter of *Ecce Homo* devoted to reflecting on *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche himself says:

> A terrific hope speaks out of this work [i.e. *The Birth of Tragedy*]. **I have really no reason to repudiate my hope in a Dionysian future for music.** Let us look a

> century into the future… This new section of life that takes in hand the greatest of all tasks, the higher breeding of humanity, including the merciless destruction of everything degenerate and parasitical, will again make possible that *surplus of life* on earth out of which the Dionysian state, too, must continue to develop. I promise a *tragic* age: tragedy, the highest art in saying Yes to life, will be reborn when humanity has behind it an awareness of the most violent yet necessary wars *without suffering thereby* . . . [9]

Consider also what Nietzsche's "aged Athenian" says of the Greeks in the final lines of *The Birth of Tragedy*: "How much did this people have to suffer to become so beautiful!" Suffering is necessary for the production of art that elevates us above mere life. For this reason, Nietzsche's paramount concern is with culture, which he defines as "unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people." [10] Art and culture are rightly understood as refinements of the Greek *physis*:

> Thus the Greek conception of culture will be unveiled… the conception of culture as a new and improved *physis*, without inner and outer, without dissimulation and convention, culture as a unanimity of life, thought, appearance, and will. [11]

The "moral" imperative behind Nietzsche's philosophy is not truthfulness, not selflessness, not utilitarianism, but this production of high culture, which means the production of powerful and splendid men. In fact this is the highest justification for entire nations and even for life itself: "A people is a detour of nature to get to six or seven great men"; [12] moreover — "the Overman *shall be* meaning of the Earth! [13] This observation is the foundation of Nietzsche's politics.

> Every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society — and it will be so again and again — a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without that *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata — when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance — that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either — the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more

> comprehensive states — in brief, simply the enhancement of the type "man," the continual "self-overcoming of man," to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense. [*Beyond Good and Evil*, §257]

High culture, which alone produces the art that makes life tolerable, presupposes aristocracy and slavery. [14]

> We lack the classical coloring of nobility because our feelings no longer know the slaves of classical antiquity. [*The Gay Science*, §18]

> The essential characteristic of a good and healthy aristocracy, however, is that it experiences itself not as a function (whether of the monarchy or the commonwealth) but as their meaning and highest justification — that it therefore accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings who, for its sake, must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments. [*Beyond Good and Evil*, §258]

The restoration of classical notions of rank and the *pathos* of distance into modern Europe is what Nietzsche's philosophy means in practice. Without this, his politics make no sense. According to Nietzsche, the fables of equality and human dignity have been undercut by the progression of modern science, which ironically grew out of the truth-exalting spirit of Christianity, and what is truly human and morally imperative is not to fabricate pretty lies about existence, but to render existence endurable once more through the production of sublime art and culture. [15] And this means embracing and elevating even cruelty and suffering, which is inseparable from the tragedy that produces great art and lends meaning to existence:

> What constitutes the painful voluptuousness of tragedy is cruelty; what seems agreeable in so-called tragic pity, and at bottom in everything sublime, up to the highest and most delicate shudders of metaphysics, receives its sweetness solely from the admixture of cruelty. What the Roman in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the cross, the Spaniard at an *auto-da-fe* or bullfight, the Japanese of today when he flocks to tragedies, the laborer in a Parisian suburb who feels a nostalgia for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who "submits to" Tristan and Isolde, her will suspended — what all of them enjoy and seek to drink in with mysterious ardor are the spicy potions of the great Circe, "cruelty." [*Beyond Good and Evil*, §229]

> *What belongs to greatness.* — Who will attain anything great if he does not find in himself the strength and the will to inflict great suffering? Being able to suffer is the least thing; weak women and even slaves often achieve virtuosity in that. But not to perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering — that is great, that belongs to greatness. [*The Gay Science*, §325]

Nietzsche's belief in the value of cruelty, suffering, slavery, and aristocracy motivates his desire for a political re-ordering of Europe. He views the self-overcoming of Christianity and of its child, democracy, and its sibling, anarchism, [16] of *petty* nationalism, of atavistic socialism, as the necessary completion of the project of the Enlightenment, which was left half-finished by Nietzsche's predecessors.

> Somewhere there are still peoples and herds, but not where we live, my brothers: here there are states. State? What is that? Well then, open your ears to me, for now I shall speak to you about the death of peoples.
>
> State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it tells lies too, and this lie crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people." …
>
> Where there is still a people, it does not understand the state and hates it as the evil eye and the sin against customs and rights.
>
> This sign I give you: every people speaks its tongue of good and evil, which the neighbor does not understand. … But the state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says it lies — and whatever it has it has stolen…
>
> All-too-many are born: for the superfluous the state was invented…
>
> "On earth there is nothing greater than I: the ordering finger of God am I" — thus roars the monster. And it is not only the long-eared and shortsighted who sink to their knees. Alas, to you too, you great souls, it whispers its dark lies. Alas, it detects the rich hearts which like to squander themselves. Indeed, it detects you too, you vanquishers of the old god. You have grown weary with fighting, and now your weariness still serves the new idol…

> Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune.
>
> Where the state ends — look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman? [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the New Idol"]

Christianity, as the first universalizing morality, the epitome of slave morality, began the two-thousand year process of *homogenization of distinct nations and peoples*, and the democratic movement, which replaced God with the state, is the heir to Christianity. A people cannot exist without its own distinct morality. The "great souls" of whom Zarathustra speaks are the philosophers of the Enlightenment, who were valiant in their devotion to the truth and idol-breaking, but who ultimately failed to complete the project of Western philosophy by not attacking the underlying value-system of Christianity. Instead, the philosophers of the Enlightenment were seduced by the state and out of vanity became its standard-bearers, allowing the "cold monster" to inherit the Christian movement and continue the levelling of mankind.

Kaufmann, in the Penguin *Portable Nietzsche*, introduces this above speech on the "New Idol" from Zarathustra as follows:

> A vehement denunciation of the state and of war in the literal sense. Straight anti-fascism, but not in the name of any rival political creed. In Nietzsche's own phrase: anti-political.

Nowhere in "The New Idol," which I have quoted almost in its entirety, does Zarathustra mention war; the alleged denunciation of it is an undue and unsubstantiated extrapolation of Kaufmann's that is entirely unsupported in the passage or in Nietzsche's other work. It is true, on the other hand, that Nietzsche's antipathy to the state is one very important difference between his philosophy and its appropriation by the Third Reich; but Nietzsche denounces the state *as an idol*, not because it is "oppressive" or, to use Kaufmann's anachronism, "fascist." Nietzsche's objection to Enlightenment state-worship, and its cousin, ideology, is that to make existence worthwhile, the state and politics should instead be put in service of high culture. The problem with contemporary Germany, as Nietzsche sees it, is that the worship of the state, combining sublimated Christianity with popular nationalism, will destroy the potential for a renewed high culture: the "delusion" among Germans that German *culture* triumphed over French culture in the war of 1870 "is in the

highest degree destructive: not because it is a delusion — for there exist very salutary and productive errors — but because it is capable of turning our victory into a defeat: *into the defeat, if not the extirpation, of the German spirit for the benefit of the 'German Reich*.'" [17]

This is why Nietzsche wanted to integrate the Jews into a new pan-European ruling caste: because he cared more about high culture than the ideology of anti-Semitism, and because he rightly foresaw that failing to resolve the *Judenfrage* in this fashion would result in disaster for Europe. [18]

As for Kaufmann's claim that Nietzsche saw himself as "antipolitical," it derives almost entirely from one line in Kaufmann's translation of *Ecce Homo*. More recent translations of *Ecce Homo*, such as the Stanford University Press edition, tend not to include the "antipolitical" passage from chapter one, section three of the book, because research in 1969 revealed that Nietzsche did not intend to publish it in the final draft:

> Through a discovery in July 1969 among the literary remains of Peter Gast — now incorporated into the Nietzsche holdings at the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar — one of these destroyed pages came to light again in Gast's copy… In this way, the editors of *KSA* 6 [***Αραλτης - An edition of Nietzsche's collected works in German***] were able to restore the authentic text of sec. 3 in the chapter "Why I am so Wise," as well as making further amendments according to Nietzsche's instructions as transcribed by Gast…
>
> The page arrived in Leipzig with Nietzsche's instructions: 'On proof sheet 1 of *Ecce Homo* instead of the former section 3." … Nietzsche now wanted to replace the former section 3 (of the first chapter "Why I am so Wise") on this sheet with a new text that delivered the most scathing account of his mother and sister. C.G. Naumann, alerted by his manager to the 'highly offensive nature' of the text, did not, for the moment, add it to the sheets approved by Nietzsche as ready for printing, intending to check the matter with Nietzsche…
>
> Immediately afterward came the news of Nietzsche's mental collapse. [19]

The use of this phrase "antipolitical" to characterize Nietzsche's entire philosophy is therefore on shaky ground; even if we accept this term in *Ecce Homo* as part of the

Nietzsche canon, it only makes sense in the context of Nietzsche's contempt for democracy and petty nationalism in favor of the "*compulsion* to grand politics."

Nietzsche's individualism cannot be regarded as the anticipation of the freedom to diddle oneself and embrace an atomized, powerless existence: *Übermensch* should not be confused with UberEats. Rather, Nietzsche's individualism is designed to prepare us for the political aftermath of the Enlightenment: as the modern world descends into herd-animalization and the destruction of distinct peoples, new tyrants, both political and spiritual, will rise up to reshape the political and spiritual order.

> The times of corruption are those when the apples fall from the tree: I mean the individuals, for they carry the seeds of the future and are the authors of the spiritual colonization and origin of new states and communities. Corruption is merely a nasty word for the autumn of a people. [*The Gay Science*, §23]

> *Whispered into the ears of the conservatives*—:[20] What people did not know earlier, what they do know today, could know — a *regression*, a turnaround in any shape or form is completely impossible. At least we physiologists know that. Yet all priests and moralists have believed in it — they *wanted* to steer humanity back, to *screw* it back into an *earlier* stage of morality. Morality has always been a bed of Procrustes. In this, even the politicians have emulated the preachers of virtue: even today there are still partries who dream as their goal the *crabwalk* of all things. But no one is at liberty to be a crab. We have no choice: we *must* move forward, which means progressing *step by step further into décadence* (— this is *my* definition of modern 'progress' …) . One can *obstruct* this development, and by means of the obstruction, stem and accumulate *décadence* itself, making it more vehement and *sudden*: more cannot be done. — [*Twilight of the Idols*, "Forays of an Untimely One" §43]

This passage from *Twilight* almost encapsulates Nietzsche's entire political project: a radicalization and thereby a completion of the Enlightenment, and a revival of antiquity through a sharpening of modernity: not wishing to turn back the clock to a pre-Christian, pre-democratic age, but rather using Christianity and democracy as the foundation for a new philosophy and new ruling caste, one that makes use of Christian homogenization and considers itself heir to the ascetic ideal and the will to truth.

Nietzsche saw the Europe of his age as *décadent*; he even saw himself as a *décadent*, albeit a reformed one. Decadence and corruption are for Nietzsche opportunities for renewal. Nietzsche's definition of *décadence* can be found in *The Case of Wagner*:

> What characterizes every *literary décadence*? The fact that life no longer dwells in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps from the sentence, the sentence spreads out and obscures the meaning of the page, the page gains life at the expense of the whole — the whole is no longer a whole. But that is symbolic for every style of *décadence*: every time anarchy of atoms, disgregation of the will, 'freedom of the individual,' morally speaking — broadened into a political theory, '*equal* rights for all.' Life, *uniform* liveliness, the throb and exuberance of life squashed into the smallest forms, the rest *poor* in life. Everywhere paralysis, adversity, torpor, *or* animosity and chaos: both increasingly eye-catching in whatever higher forms of organization one climbs to. The whole no longer lives at all: it is put together, calculated, artificial, and artifact. —

Nietzsche wrote this in a book on Wagner, but it applies just as well to his view of modern Europe, where, due to the advance of *décadence*, society in the real meaning of the term is no longer possible (see *The Gay Science*, §356: "*All of us are no longer material for a society;* this is a truth for which the time has come."). [21] Europe is descending into "anarchy of the atoms," and just as the French Revolution was redeemed only by the emergence of Napoleon, [22] who was a rebirth of the ancient world, Nietzsche's decadent Europe will be ripe for tropical types, reminiscent of Alcibiades, who thrive where uniformity collapses. [23]

> Eventually, however, a day arrives when conditions become more fortunate and the tremendous tension decreases; perhaps there are no longer any enemies among one's neighbors, and the means of life, even for the enjoyment of life, are superabundant. At one stroke the bond and constraint of the old discipline's are torn: it no longer seems necessary, a condition of existence — if it persisted it would only be a form of luxury, an archaizing taste. Variation, whether as deviation (to something higher, subtler, rarer) or as degeneration and monstrosity, suddenly appears on the scene in the greatest abundance and magnificence; the individual dares to be individual and different. [*Beyond Good and Evil*, §262]

> Call that in which the distinction of the European is sought 'civilization' or 'humanization' or 'progress' or call it simply — without praise or blame — using a

> political formula, Europe's democratic movement: behind all the moral and political foregrounds to which such formulas point, a tremendous physiological process is taking place and gaining momentum. The Europeans are becoming more similar to each other; they become more and more detached from the conditions under which races originate that are tied to some climate or class; they become increasingly independent of any determinate milieu that would like to inscribe itself for centuries in body and soul with the same demands. Thus an essentialy supra-national and nomadic type of man is gradually coming up, a type that possesses, physiologically speaking, a maximum of the art and power of adaptation as its typical distinction…
>
> The very same new conditions that will on the average lead to the leveling and mediocritization of man — to a useful, industrious, bandy, multi-purpose herd animal — are likely in the highest degree to give birth to exceptional human beings of the most dangerous and attractive quality.
>
> But while the democratization of Europe leads to the production of a type that is prepared for slavery in the subtlest sense, in single, exceptional cases the strong human being will have to turn out stronger and richer than perhaps ever before — thanks to the absence of prejudice from his training, thanks to the tremendous manifoldness of practice, art, and mask. **I meant to say: the democratization of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the cultivation of tyrants — taking that word in every sense, including the most spiritual.** [*Beyond Good and Evil,* §242]

What will be the proximate cause of this rise of tyrants? In a word, Russia —

> I do not say this because I want it to happen: the opposite would be rather more after my heart — I mean such an increase in the menace of Russia that Europe would have to resolve to become menacing, too. Namely, to acquire one will by means of a new caste that would rule Europe, a long, terrible will of its own that would be able to cast its goals millennia hence — so the long-drawn-out comedy of its many splinter states as well as its dynastic and democratic splinter wills would come to an end. The time for petty politics is over: the very next century will bring the fight for the dominion of the earth — the *compulsion* to large-scale politics. [*Beyond Good and Evil,* §208]

The first, and thus far only, historical attempt at an implementation of Nietzsche's political philosophy was enacted by the European hard right in the 20th century. It was, however, only a partial and unsuccessful implementation, a marriage of Nietzschean themes with movements Nietzsche opposed, such as German nationalism, undue extrapolations from Darwinism, and of course the expulsion of the Jews from Europe's ruling caste, rather than their integration. [24] Many academics and intellectuals have written verbose homilies about the tragedy of the Nazis' appropriation of Nietzsche, as if his work was forever tarnished by the events of the 20th century. But the reality is, for the follower of Nietzsche, far more heartening: due to the misguided and malicious censorship and lobotomization of his philosophy after 1945, the world has not grasped the implications of Nietzsche's work, and therefore a faithful implementation of his politics is an unfulfilled task. Nietzsche was centuries ahead of his time, and the diseases of slave morality, decadence, and paralysis of the will have become endemic since his death. We live in an atomized age without nations and peoples, and Nietzsche's philosophy is better suited for our individualist age than for the 1930s — we live without the pretense of dignity and the consolation of culture.

If the dangers that Nietzsche warned of are more formidable today, even *that* should be cause for inspiration, because freedom is tied to the fight against subjection:

> *My concept of freedom.* — The value of a thing sometimes lies not in what can be achieved with it but in how much has been paid for it — what it *costs* us. I shall give an example. Liberal institutions immediately stop being liberal once they have been achieved: in time, there is nothing worse and more detrimental to freedom than liberal institutions. We all know *what* they set in motion: they undermine the will to power, they are the leveling of hill and dale exalted to a morality, they make everything small, cowardly and pleasurable — the herd animal triumphs with them every time. Liberalism: in plain language *herd-animalization…* While people campaign for them, these institutions produce quite different effects; they do indeed clearly promote freedom. On closer inspection, it is war that produces these effects, the war *for* liberal institutions which, as war, lets the *illiberal* instincts persist. And war fosters freedom. For what is freedom! That we have the will to self-accountability. That we maintain the distance separating us. That we are increasingly indifferent to toil, hardness, renunciation, even to life. That we are prepared to sacrifice human beings to our cause, not excluding ourselves. Freedom means that the manly instincts, joyous in war and

> victory, hold mastery over other instincts like, for example, 'happiness.' The human being *who has become free*, and much more so the *spirit* that has become free, tramples underfoot the despicable brand of complacency dreamed up by shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, the English and other democrats. The free human being is a *warrior*. — [*Twilight of the Idols*, "Forays of an Untimely One," §38]

There are no heirs to this spirit today, save for those students and admirers of Nietzsche who are ready to embrace the spirit of antiquity in our age. Nietzsche's politics is ripe for individuals united neither by mere "citizenship" nor ideology, but a willingness to *will* themselves towards something higher, and to revive antiquity through daring and uncompromising projects. The obfuscation surrounding Nietzsche's politics, and of his teaching of nature, will only make its re-emergence more vehement and sudden. And as what remains of the West falls further into herd-animalization, the arrival, from beneath an atomized world, of *tyrants* — spiritual and literal — in the ancient style becomes ever more certain.

1 *Untimely Meditations,* "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," §4:

The individual must be consecrated to something higher than himself — that is the meaning of tragedy; he must be free of the terrible anxiety which death and time evoke in the individual: for at any moment, in the briefest atom of his life's course, he may encounter something holy that endlessly outweighs all his struggle and all his distress — this is what it means to have a sense for the tragic*; all the ennoblement of mankind is enclosed in this supreme task…*

2 Kaufmann's translation of: *Die Frage ist, wie weit es lebenfördernd, lebenerhaltend, Arterhaltend, vielleicht gar Art-züchtend ist.* A classic example of Kaufmann's rendering of "*züchtend*" as "cultivating" instead of "breeding."

3 *The Antichrist* is Nietzsche's most important and unsettling book. Hollingdale would claim it was a product of his incipient insanity and scarcely worth reading, while Kaufmann would offer his usual repertoire of disdain and hand-wringing ("Stylistically, the work is, like most of Nietzsche's books, very uneven…frequently the rhetoric gets out of hand… Philosophically, his uncritical use of terms like life, nature, and decadence greatly weakens his case. Historically, he is often ignorant…*The Antichrist* is unscholarly and so full of faults that only a pedant could have any wish to catalogue them…").

4 This is the Stanford translation. Kaufmann has somewhat softer wording: '…active pity for all the failures and all the weak: Christianity.'

5 Kaufmann instead uses the passive future tense: '…what type of man shall be bred, shall be willed…'

6 Cf. the *Genealogy*, preface, sec 6: "What if a symptom of regression were inherent in the 'good,' likewise a danger, a seduction, a poison, a narcotic, through which the present was possibly living at *the expense* of *the future?* Perhaps more comfortably, less dangerously, but at the same time in a meaner style, more basely? — So that precisely morality would be to blame if the ***highest power* and *splendor*** actually possible to the type man was never in fact attained? So that precisely morality was the danger of dangers?"

7 Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, pp. 141.

8 Kaufmann's *Nietzsche*, Chapter 4, especially:

In the highest specimens of humanity we envisage the meaning of life and history: what can an additional ten or twenty centuries bring to light that we could not find in contemplating Aeschylus and Heraclitus, Socrates and Jesus, Leonardo and Michelangelo, Shakespeare and Goethe, Caesar

and Napoleon, or Plato and Spinoza? In them the events of history have truly been 'intensified into symbols.'

9 *Ecce Homo*, "The Birth of Tragedy," §4, tr. Del Caro et al, Stanford UP.

10 *Untimely Meditations*, "Davis Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer," §1, tr. Hollingdale.

11 *Untimely Meditations,* "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," §10.

12 *Beyond Good and Evil*, §126.

13 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Zarathustra's Prologue," §3, Kaufmann's translation.

14 See also this passage from Nietzsche's early essay "The Greek State," already mentioned in part one of this series:

Now we have the general idea to which are to be subordinated the feelings which the Greek had with regard to labour and slavery. Both were considered by them as a necessary disgrace, of which one feels ashamed, as a disgrace and as a necessity at the same time. In this feeling of shame is hidden the unconscious discernment that the real aim needs those conditional factors, but that in that need lies the fearful and beast-of-prey-like quality of the Sphinx Nature, who in the glorification of the artistically free culture-life so beautifully stretches forth her virgin-body, Culture, which is chiefly a real need for art, rests upon a terrible basis: the latter however makes itself known in the twilight sensation of shame. In order that there may be a broad, deep, and fruitful soil for the development of art, the enormous majority must, in the service of a minority be slavishly subjected to life's struggle, to a greater degree than their own wants necessitate. At their cost, through the surplus of their labour, that privileged class is to be relieved from the struggle for existence, in order to create and to satisfy a new world of want.

15 Cf. *Untimely Meditations,* "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," §9:

*If, on the other hand, the doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and species, **of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal** — doctrines which I consider true but deadly — are thrust upon the people for another generation with the rage for instruction that has by now become normal, no one should be surprised if the people perishes of petty egoism, ossification and greed, falls apart and ceases to be a people; in its place systems of individualist egoism, brotherhoods for the rapacious exploitation of the non-brothers, and similar creations of utilitarian vulgarity may perhaps appear in the arena of the future."*

16 Cf. *Twilight of the Idols*, "Christian and Anarchist":

The Christian and the Anarchist — both are décadents. *— But even when the Christian condemns, slanders, besmirches 'the world,' he does it with the same instinct with which the socialist worker condemns, slanders, besmirches* society*: the 'Last Judgment itself is still the sweet consolation of revenge — the same revolution as that expected by the socialist worker, only somewhat further off. . . The "beyond" itself — why have a beyond, if not as a means of besmirching this world?*

17 *Untimely Meditations*, "Davis Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer," §1, tr. Hollingdale.

18 See *Beyond Good and Evil*, §251. Nietzsche says:

A thinker who has the development of Europe on his conscience will, in all his projects for this future, take into account the Jews as well as the Russians as the provisionally surest and most probable factors in the great play and fight of forces. What is called a "nation" in Europe today, and is really rather a res fact *than a* res nata *(and occasionally can hardly be told from a* res ficta et picta*) is in any case something evolving, young, and easily changed, not yet a race, let alone such an* aere perennius *as the Jewish type: these "nations" really should carefully avoid every hotheaded rivalry and hostility. That the Jews, if they wanted it — or if they were forced into it, which seems to be what the anti-Semites want — could even now have preponderance, indeed quite literally mastery over Europe, that is certain; that they are not working and planning for that is equally certain.*

Meanwhile they want and wish rather, even with some importunity, to be absorbed and assimilated by Europe; they long to be fixed, permitted, respected somewhere at long last, putting an end to the nomads' life, to the "Wandering Jew"; and this bent and impulse (which may even express an attenuation of the Jewish instincts) should be noted well and accommodated: to that end it might be useful and fair to expel the anti-Semitic screamers from the country. Accommodated with all caution, with selection; approximately as the English nobility does. It is obvious that the stronger and already more clearly defined types of the new Germanism can enter into relations with them with the least hesitation; for example, officers of the nobility from the March Brandenburg: it would be interesting in many ways to see whether the hereditary art of commanding and obeying — in both of these, the land just named is classical today — could not be enriched with the genius of money and patience (and above all a little spirituality, which is utterly lacking among these officers). But here it is proper to break off my cheerful Germanomania and holiday oratory; for I am beginning to tquch on what is serious for me, the "European problem" as I understand it, the cultivation of a new caste that will rule Europe.

19 *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* vol. 9, ed. Del Caro et al, Stanford UP, pp. 550.

20 Also translated as "*Said into the conservatives' ear.*"

21 Cf. also *Untimely Meditations,* "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," §4:

"Are there still human beings, one then asks oneself, or perhaps only thinking-, writing- and speaking-machines?"

22 Cf. *The Will to Power*, §877: "The Revolution made Napoleon posssible: that is its justification."

23 Cf. *Human, All-too-Human*, "Religion and Government."

24 Crane Brinton's biography Nietzsche, an unbalanced and unsympathetic 1941 work that suffers from an obsession with National Socialism, is nevertheless an invaluable resource in the history of Nietzsche's influence because it shows what the liberal American establishment thought of his philosophy prior to Kaufmann's "rehabilitation." Here is, in a paragraph, what Brinton thought of Nietzsche's politics:

*The Nazis then, and their fascist followers are tough Nietzscheans in a more than literary and aesthetic sense. Nietzsche is held in high honor today in his native land. He has become one of the Early Fathers of the revolutionary Nazi faith. Point for point he preached, along with a good deal else which the Nazis chose to disremember, most of the cardinal values of the professed Nazi creed — a transvaluation of all values, the sanctity of the will to power, the right and duty of the strong to dominate, the sole right of great states to exist, a renewing, a rebirth, of German and hence European society. More vaguely, Nietzsche preached the coming of the Superman; and though many different ethical values can be, and have been, attached to the concept of the Superman, both the Nazi idea of the Master-race and the Nazi appeal to the principle of leadership (*Führerprinzip*) are among the most obvious and congruous derivatives of that concept. Finally, the emotional tone of Nietzsche's life and writings, as distinguished from his ideas, is much like what we hear of the emotional tone of inner Nazi circles. The unrelieved tension, the feverish aspiration, the driving madness, the great noise Nietzsche made for himself, the Nazi elite is making for an uncomfortably large part of the world. But these are vague, grand terms. The situation can be described much more simply. Nietzsche, like the Nazi leaders, was never really house-broken.*

---

35 Likes

6 Comments

Write a comment...

John Holbrook John's Substack Jul 19, 2023 · *edited Jul 19, 2023* Liked by Araltes

This is brilliant, as are the rest of your articles. You're one of the few who genuinely understands Nietzsche. I admire your thought and writing, and I hope you write more soon in this series, it's important work!

I would also be very interested in your thoughts on the "university" and the Spartan tyrants in particular. Also Periander of Corinth! And the figure of the "lawgiver" in ancient Greece, especially in relation to Nietzsche's philosopher as lawgiver...

LIKE (1) REPLY SHARE

Elgar Vaivars Mar 13, 2022 Liked by Araltes

What's next at the University of Frogs? These first two articles were excellent!

LIKE (1) REPLY SHARE

1 reply by Araltes

4 more comments...

© 2024 Araltes · Privacy · Terms · Collection notice
Substack is the home for great culture